

**Higher Education Emergency Relief Funding (HEERF II)
under the CRRSA Act
Emergency Relief Grants for Students
July 9, 2021 – Final Report**

On January 14, 2021, The U.S. Department of Education announced that an additional \$21.2 billion is available to institutions of higher education (IHEs) to serve students and ensure learning continues during the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding was allocated to the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund II (HEERF II) by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), which was signed into law by President Donald J. Trump on Dec. 27, 2020.

Public and non-profit schools were allowed to use their awards for financial aid grants to students, student support activities, and to cover a variety of institutional costs, including lost revenue, reimbursement for expenses already incurred, technology costs associated with a transition to distance education, faculty and staff trainings, and payroll.

Allocations to institutions were based on a formula that included the relative shares of Federal Pell Grant recipients, the relative shares of non-Pell Grant recipients, and the relative shares of Federal Pell and non-Pell Grant recipients exclusively enrolled in distance education prior to the coronavirus emergency.

Public and private non-profit IHEs that already had received HEERF funding from the CARES Act were not required to submit a new or revised application to receive additional funding under the CRRSAA. Northern Wyoming Community College (NWCCD) had previously been allotted \$587,680 in funding for emergency grants to students from the HEERF I program under the CARES Act. On January 15, 2021, NWCCD was allotted another \$587,680 designated for financial aid grants to students. Because our president, Dr. Walt Tribley, had already signed a Certification and Agreement for the first disbursement of HEERF funds, we were only required to draw down reimbursement from the HEERF II funding, within 90 days, to extend the terms of the original grant contract. The deadline for NWCCD was April 15, 2021. Guidance from our professional organizations and the U.S. Department of Education (ED) indicated that we only needed to draw down a small amount within the 90 days. In our opinion, it was only fair to determine how to distribute the funding to all eligible students instead of somehow choosing a few students to receive grants, allowing us to complete a draw and, therefore, accept the extension on the HEERF grant. Because of this, we set out to create a plan for disbursing the entire \$587,680.

Directors from NWCCD's Financial Aid and Business Office began reviewing ways to allocate this new funding that were allowable and provided fair and immediate aid to NWCCD students impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the HEERF I allocation in April of 2020, we required students, who met the criteria defined by ED at that time, to have a completed FAFSA on file and to respond to our text and email messages by returning an Emergency Grant Request form, in order to be considered eligible for the emergency grant funding. With that process, our response rate was much lower than we had hoped. HEERF II funding had some changes to the eligible student requirements from ED that allowed us to eliminate the need for a completed FAFSA to be on file. We also chose to eliminate the barrier created by the requirement to return an Emergency Grant Request form. In addition, we began pursuing a no-cost extension on the period of performance for the HEERF II funding so that we could request to supplement the \$587,680 student grant funding with funds from the HEERF II Institutional grant. This would allow us the ability to grant students emergency aid spread out over the upcoming 2021-2022

school year. Our program contact from ED denied our extension and, by this time, President Biden had signed the America's Rescue Plan (ARP) that allotted another \$2.5M in emergency student grant funding to NWCCD. With this new information and after much discussion, we concluded that all students have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and, as a result, demonstrate exceptional need. With administrative approval, we carefully evaluated our students to determine those who were degree-seeking and registered in the spring 2021 term. Because the allowability of extending these grants to international students was still uncertain, we removed those students from the list. We also checked to be sure that all Pell-eligible students were included. The final evaluation resulted in 1,525 eligible students. Using the entire HEERF II allotment of \$587,680, we were able to distribute \$385.37 to each eligible student. Those grants were posted to the students' accounts by April 6, 2021, and refund checks or direct deposits were processed and disbursed on April 7, 2021.

All students who received the HEERF II grant received the following email at any email address that NWCCD had on record, with the subject line reading "Federal funding being sent to you."



Dear Christina,

You are receiving this email because you are eligible for a direct payment from HEERF grant funding. You do not need to submit an application or take any additional steps to receive your grant.

NWCCD has received federal funding from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA Act). A portion of this funding for Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEERF) is designated for direct payments to students.

HEERF funding is designated for you to use on any component of your Cost of Attendance, i.e. tuition and fees, books and supplies, or other basic living expenses. HEERF funding can also be used to help you with emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus, such as food, housing, health care (including mental), or childcare.

For more information about HEERF funding, visit <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-quickly-makes-available-more-21-billion-taxpayer-funds-support-continued-education-colleges-universities>

NWCCD will be processing checks and direct deposits for HEERF funding on April 7. You can review and update your direct deposit information in your Self Service account here <https://nwccds.sheridan.edu/Student/HumanResources/BankingInformation>

NWCCD will not apply any portion of the HEERF grant to overdue student balances.

If you have an unpaid balance with NWCCD from this semester and you would like to use your check or direct deposit to cover that balance, please contact the Business Office at your earliest convenience to make payment arrangements.

Sheridan College Business Office 307-675-0336

Gillette College Business Office 307-681-6331

If you have any questions, please contact the Financial Aid Office on your campus, or email us at wecare@sheridan.edu.

Sheridan - 307-675-0200

Gillette - 307-681-6041

NOTICE: This message is intended only for the personal and confidential use of the designated recipient names above. If you are not the intended recipient of this message, you are notified that by law, any review, dissemination, distribution or copying of this message is strictly prohibited. In addition, if you have received this message in error, please advise the sender by email and delete the message.

In addition, students who received direct deposits (ACH) of the HEERF II disbursement received an email at the email address provided by the student on the direct deposit agreement. The email template is below:

Dear @CHK.MISC.NAME,

You are receiving this email because you have received a direct payment from HEERF grant funding.

NWCCD has received federal funding from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA Act). A portion of this funding for Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEERF) is designated for direct payments to students.

HEERF funding is designated for you to use on any component of your Cost of Attendance, i.e. tuition and fees, books and supplies, or other basic living expenses. HEERF funding can also be used to help you with emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus, such as food, housing, health care (including mental), or childcare.

If you have any questions, please contact the Financial Aid Office on your campus or email us at wecare@sheridan.edu.

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Finally, all disbursements that were given on paper checks and mailed through the U.S. Postal Service, had the following message printed on the check stub:

Dear NWCCD Student,

You are receiving this check because you have received a direct payment from HEERF grant funding.

NWCCD has received federal funding from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA Act). A portion of this funding for Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEERF) is designated for **direct payments to students**.

HEERF funding is **designated for you to use on any component of your Cost of Attendance**, i.e. tuition and fees, books and supplies, or other basic living expenses. HEERF funding can also **be used to help you with emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus**, such as food, housing, health care (including mental), or childcare.

If you have any questions, please contact the Financial Aid Office on your campus or email us at wecare@sheridan.edu.

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This constitutes the final reporting on the HEERF fund expenditures for the HEERF II distribution received by NWCCD and designated for emergency relief grants to students.